

THE CONFERENCE, 1902.

I have received a very pressing request, not to say command, to write something about the Conference for our Magazine, but we shall all, I hope, be able to read the entire speeches printed in the Parent's Review, so that it would be useless and very daring for me to attempt to tell you much of them in detail. Unfortunately our President, the Countess of Aberdeen, was unable to be there on Tuesday to open the Conference, so that the first item on the programme was Miss Mason's paper, beautifully read by Lady Campbell, on "Education as the Science of Relations." This paper was full of practical and rousing suggestions. Miss Mason compared the autobiographies "Præterita" and "The Prelude," and showed by means of these works how different was the education received by the little Ruskin and the little Wordsworth. Ruskin had no companions of his own age, none of the usual rough and tumble boys' games, and little liberty to stroll where he would; while on the other hand Wordsworth had as free a boyhood as any little lad in the land, and long years after could live again in spirit the enjoyment of those character-forming days.

Ruskin became one of our prophets it is true, but, and this is the point well marked in the paper, how much greater might he not have been if he had received more golden opportunities, more of those judicious opportunities which, if given wisely, constitute the real education of little children. Another plea there was too, for vigorous, strenuous action in work or play.

Dr. Gow's speech on "Our English Schools" was, as Dr. Schofield expressed it, "packed full of common sense:" his remark on duty would do well for the motto of every schoolroom; he expanded the line "To do my duty in that state of life" into the words "to do thoroughly whatever is given to me to do, and never know when I am beaten." He lamented the numerous wooden examinations, which dwarfed

the work of teachers and taught alike, examinations which more and more in many of our schools are regarded as an end and not as a means of Education. Our enthusiasm for games he did not consider too great, but the time ought to come when the enthusiasm for work, not only in the schoolroom but in every path of life, should be as great. Very forcible was his plain handling of the truth when he told us that slack, careless work, in any position of trust was, and must always be, dishonest, even fraudulent work.

We spent a very pleasant evening at 50, Porchester Terrace, where Mrs. Franklin welcomed us most kindly, and where by common consent old Students clustered together and talked, and many of us were able for the first time to make the acquaintance of our new Secretary, Miss Armfield.

Miss Helen Webb's speech was delightful. One of her sweet little anecdotes I must quote because it conveys such a subtle warning to all who have to educate or "help" children.

A tiny boy standing by the nursery window said "Mother, there is a fly here that I should like to help." Mother without paying much attention said "Very well, dear." In a few moments the little voice said sadly "Mother, I've helped that fly too much, and it's dead."

The whole keynote of the Conference was earnestness and energy; everyone could not of course agree on every point, but everyone must agree that it is well for us to have our ideals raised, and a Conference must be useful, which tells us unmistakeably that what we ought to aim at is—Perfection.

E. S. M.